COMMONWEALTH BUREAU OF CENSUS AND STATISTICS

CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA

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CENSUS OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

30 JUNE 1966

THE ABORIGINAL POPULATION (REVISED STATEMENT)

STATES AND TERRITORIES OF AUSTRALIA

This Revised Statement supersedes the Special Statement - "Full-blood Aborigines" issued on 11 August 1967, which contained preliminary figures mainly compiled in the field by Census collectors at the time of the taking of the Census.

2. Final figures for full-blood Aborigines have now been compiled from Householder's Schedules. However, in some States these figures vary substantially from the preliminary figures and reveal large and often unexplained departures from the pattern revealed in previous Censuses.

3. The movements in the figures for full-blood Aborigines are believed to be the net result of a number of known and opposing influences on the accuracy of reporting, and further possible causes can be reasonably conjectured. However, it is concluded that -

(a) reporting by persons with Aboriginal blood in the 1966 Census was insufficiently precise to enable a reliable dissection of full-blood and half-blood Aborigines to be made, and

(b) that the only reliable information regarding Aborigines which has been obtained at the 1966 or previous Censuses is the total of full-blood and half-blood Aborigines and even this total was deficient prior to 1966 on the grounds of inadequate coverage of full-blood Aborigines (see comments on coverage below).

Coverage

4. Aborigines have been enumerated in all Censuses of the Commonwealth. However, the degree of coverage and information obtained has varied substantially since 1911. Since the Census taken in 1933, the adequacy of the particulars obtained has improved progressively, as a result of an increasing number of Aborigines coming into contact with more populated areas.

5. At the 1966 Census extensive arrangements were made to obtain as full a coverage of full-blood Aborigines as possible and to enumerate fully those Aborigines "out of contact". Throughout Australia the assistance of Aboriginal welfare bodies, mission superintendents, station owners, patrol officers and police was sought in an effort to include all Aborigines and to obtain complete information about them. In particular, in the Northern Territory, which in 1961 accounted for 43 per cent of the Aboriginal population of Australia, information was obtained from missions and settlements concerning Aborigines normally resident at such locations but who were absent at the time of the Census, and of Aborigines resident at such locations but who normally reside elsewhere. The two sets of information were then reconciled to produce what is considered to be a fairly complete and accurate coverage of Aborigines in the Territory.

Form of the inquiry

6. At Censuses prior to the 1966 Census the instructions relating to race were such that they allowed a relatively high degree of subjective judgment on the part of respondents. No definition of either full-blood or half-caste was contained in the Schedule. For example, from 1933 to 1961 persons were asked to state:

> "For persons of European Race, wherever born, write "European". For non-Europeans state the race to which they belong for example, "Aboriginal", "Chinese", "Negro", "Afghan", etc. If the person is half-caste with one parent of European race, write also "H.C.", for example "H.C. Aboriginal", "H.C. Chinese", etc."

At the 1966 Census the instructions were redesigned as follows:

"State each person's race. For persons of European race wherever born, write "European". Otherwise state whether Aboriginal, Chinese, Indian, Japanese, etc., as the case may be. If of more than one race give particulars, for example, ½ European - ½ Aboriginal, ¾ Aboriginal - ¼ Chinese, ½ European - ½ Chinese".

7. It was intended that information obtained in accordance with the instruction at the 1966 Census would provide the basis for classifying Aborigines with some precision into full-blood and half-blood. A full-blood Aboriginal is by definition, a person who describes himself as having more than 50 per cent Aboriginal blood; a half-blood Aboriginal is a person who describes himself as having 50 per cent Aboriginal blood and 50 per cent European blood.

8. The improvement in classification achieved by the revised instructions resulted in a greater number of persons being classified as "full-blood" at the 1966 Census than at previous Censuses. However, evidence suggests that the number of full-blood Aborigines may well be overstated, particularly in New South Wales and Victoria, and the number of half-bloods understated owing to some half-blood Aborigines answering "Aboriginal" and therefore being classified as "full-blood". There is therefore, some doubt as to the accuracy of the separate figures of full-blood and half-blood Aborigines and for this reason it is considered desirable not to publish separate figures for these two groups. However, pending further investigation, figures for persons with 50 per cent Aboriginal blood or more are considered reliable as a whole for the 1966 Census. It is considered that, at the 1961 and 1954 Censuses, a number of persons of less than 50 per cent Aboriginal blood described themselves as "half-blood" as there was no instruction to state degree of blood.

THE ABORIGINAL POPULATION (a) : STATES AND TERRITORIES OF AUSTRALIA

CENSUSES, 1954, 1961 AND 1966

State or Territory	Census, 1954			Census, 1961			Census, 1966		
	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons
New South Wales	6,278	5,935	12,213	7,494	7,222	14,716	6,737	6,876	13,613
Victoria	691	704	1,395	899	897	1,796	856	934	1,790
Queensland	8,368	7,781	16,149	10,146	9,550	19,696	9,644	9,359	19,003
South Australia	1,675	1,537	3,212	2,607	2,277	4,884	2,914	2,591	5,505
Western Australia	6,564	6,135	12,699	8,351	7,925	16,276	9,505	8,934	18,439
Tasmania	50	43	93	24	14	38	29	26	55
Northern Territory	5,990	5,798	11,788	9,013	8,747	17,760	10,651	10,468	21,119
Australian Capital Territory	100	73	173	78	65	143	52	44	96
AUSTRALIA	29,716	28,006	57,722	38,612	36,697	75,309	40,388	39,232	79,620

(a) Persons of 50 per cent or more Aboriginal blood. Enumerated population only. See NOTE below.

NOTE. Prior to the 1966 Census, Aborigines "out of contact" were not enumerated and estimates of these were made by authorities responsible for native welfare. It is estimated that at the 1954 Census 12,956 full-blood Aborigines (of which 2,311 were estimated to be in Queensland, 1,760 in South Australia, 3,516 in Western Australia, and 5,369 in the Northern Territory) were not contacted by Census collectors and were not included in the Census. Increasing numbers however, were coming into contact and at the 1961 Census it is estimated that 2,000 full-blood Aborigines in Western Australia and 1,944 in the Northern Territory were not contacted by Census collectors. At the 1966 Census, efforts were made to obtain complete coverage (see comments in paragraphs 4 and 5 above).

9. An analysis is now being carried out of all persons with Aboriginal blood who were enumerated at the 1966 Census, and at a later date it is proposed to publish statistics of characteristics of all persons with Aboriginal blood.

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CANBERRA, A.C.T. 27 NOVEMBER 1967

NOTE. Inquiries concerning these statistics may be made in Canberra by telephoning 41971, Extension 25.